

Prepared by
Recruiting Division (G-PMR)
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters
Washington, D.C. 20593

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
COAST GUARD

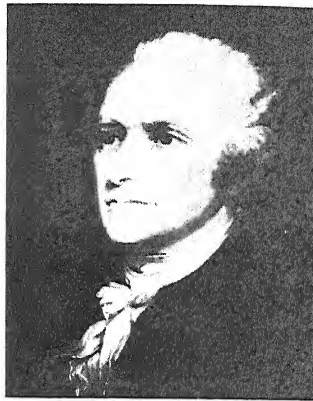


CG-378-8

A Ready Reference Guide

The Many Missions of the United States Coast Guard





*Alexander Hamilton, first
Treasury Secretary of the
United States.*

1790-1860

Today's modern Coast Guard traces its history to 1790, the year Alexander Hamilton, the first Treasury Secretary of the United States, asked Congress for "ten boats" to guard the young nation's coast and economy.

Before the Revolution, smuggling was a patriotic way to avoid British "taxation without representation." By the time the war ended, though, it had become a bad habit that threatened to bankrupt the newly formed government. Hamilton needed a fleet to enforce customs laws. Thus, on August 4, 1790, the Revenue Marine was formed.

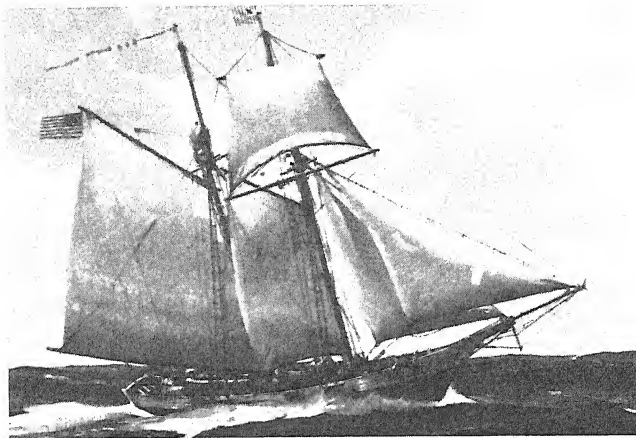
A year later, the first revenue cutter, *Massachusetts*, was launched at Newburyport, Mass. It measured 50 feet in length, nearly 18 feet across the beam and carried six swivel guns. Meanwhile, the Revenue Marine's first commissioned officer, Hopley Yeaton, was assigned to command the cutter *Scammel*, which also went into service in 1791.

The first cutters patrolled the Chesapeake and Delaware bays, Long Island Sound, and along the coast from Massachusetts to Georgia. For nearly eight years, these ships served as the nation's principal seagoing force.

But in 1798, with the United States and France engaged in an undeclared war at sea, Congress organized a regular Navy. The Revenue Marine was put in temporary command of Navy Secretary Benjamin Stoddert. Stoddert sent four fleets of 20 ships, including eight revenue cutters, against the French in 1799. The cutters captured 16 of 20 French ships taken by the American fleets. The cutter *Eagle* distinguished itself by capturing five French ships, assisting in the capture of 10 others and freeing seven American vessels.

Between 1795 and 1801 the ten original cutters were replaced with 13 larger ships carrying heavier guns and larger crews.

It was not long before the Revenue Marine was called upon to fight. During the War of 1812, nine cutters with 15 to 30-man crews joined the struggle. Before the war was a week old, the cutter *Jefferson* captured *Patriot*, the first British prize to fall into American hands.



U.S. Revenue Cutter Massachusetts, the first of Hamilton's fleet.

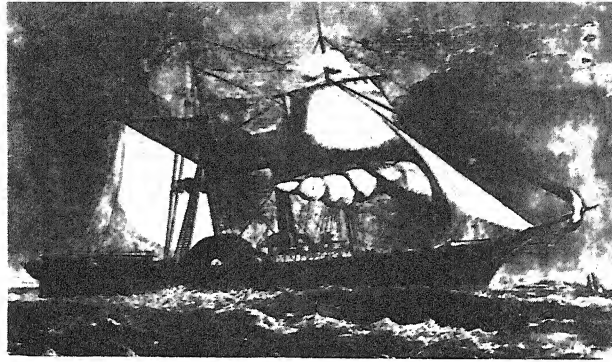
Pirates and slave ships kept the cutters at sea after the war ended in 1815. Besides capturing formidable pirate ships, in 1819 the Revenue Marine wiped out Patterson's Town, a pirate stronghold on Breton Island in the Gulf of Mexico. This raid practically ended piracy in the Gulf of Mexico. After Congress passed a law forbidding slave importation, the cutters Alabama and Dallas freed nearly 500 prisoners from slave ships during the early 1820's.

The Revenue Marine carried off an early amphibious assault of combined forces after the Seminole Indians ambushed and massacred soldiers at Fort Brock, Florida. In 1836, the cutter Washington landed men and guns in time to save the fort and the single surviving soldier still defending it. Eight cutters continued operating in Florida with the Army and Navy for over two years until peace was restored.

John Spencer, undersecretary of the Treasury, set up a Revenue Marine Bureau within the Treasury Department in 1843. This reorganized the service into mission categories similar to those of the present Coast Guard. Also about this time the service began building cutters with iron hulls and auxiliary steam power. But the early steamers were plagued with problems and it was several years before they proved their worth.

1861-1918

An early successful steam-powered cutter, the Harriet Lane, won considerable fame during the Civil War. Built in 1857 at a cost of \$140,000, the side-wheeler was credited with firing the first naval shot of the War Between the States. On the eve of the bombardment of Fort Sumpter, the Harriet Lane joined a fleet sent there to protect the beleaguered post. As the southern steamer Nashville tried to run into Charleston Harbor, the Harriet Lane fired a shot across its bow and the southern ship turned away.



The U.S. Revenue Cutter Harriet Lane, under way during the Civil War.

Soon after this, the cutter participated in the first Union victory, with the capture of Fort Clark and Fort Hatteras, bases for blockade runners. Later transferred to the regular Navy, the Harriet Lane was captured and finished the war as a Confederate ship.

The Revenue Cutter Naugatuck escorted the Union vessel Monitor on March 9, 1862, when she sailed out to confront the ironclad Merrimack at Hampton Roads.

By November, 1864, the cutter fleet had grown to 28 ships, half of them steam-powered. After the Civil War the Revenue Marine, now renamed the Revenue Cutter Service, underwent significant changes. Regulations issued in 1871 ordered regular inspection of cutters and professional examinations of their officers. The service also started a training program in 1876 to shape cadets into seagoing officers.

With the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the cutter McCulloch was ordered to join Admiral George Dewey's forces in the Philippines. The vessel fought honorably during the Battle of Manila Bay and raced to Hong Kong to cable news of the American victory to the rest of the world. In another battle at Cardenas, the cutter Hudson dodged Spanish gunfire to tow the crippled Navy torpedo boat Winslow from beneath enemy shore batteries. Altogether, 18 revenue cutters participated in the eight-month war.

In 1915, the Revenue Cutter Service and the Lifesaving Service were combined under the command of a cap-

The famous U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear, shown here locked in Arctic ice.



tain commandant to form the U.S. Coast Guard. It has borne the name ever since.

When the United States went to war with Germany on April 6, 1917, fifteen Coast Guard cutters, 200 officers and 5,000 enlisted men went into action alongside the Navy providing protection to cargo ships and convoys and screening transports from enemy fire. Five Coast Guard cutters made up one of the most famous antisubmarine units that operated in the Atlantic fleet.

One of these cutters, the Seneca, pursued and outnumbered by German U-boats, stopped three times to rescue 81 crewmembers of the British sloop Cowslip. The cutter later lost 11 of its crew in a vain attempt to keep the British ship Wellington afloat.

In 1918, the cutter Tampa, having safely escorted a convoy to Gibraltar, disappeared with a loud explosion on its return trip to England. A German torpedo was credited with the sinking and all 111 Coast Guardsmen and four Navy men aboard lost their lives.

In another incident much closer to home, a tower lookout at Coast Guard Station Chicamacomico, N.C., saw the British tanker Mirlo get torpedoed seven miles offshore. The station's motor surfboat made four trips through burning gasoline and heavy seas to save 36 British seamen.

The Coast Guard suffered greater losses, in proportion to its strength, than any other American fighting force during World War I.

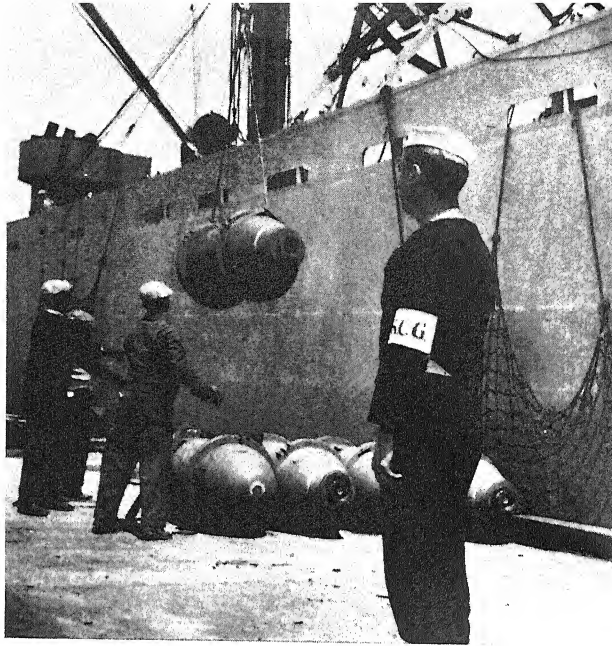
1919-1949

One important consequence of the war was the emergence of Coast Guard aviation. During the summer of 1916, Lieutenants Elmer F. Stone and Norman B. Hall began flying search and rescue missions with borrowed aircraft. Their success in locating persons in distress encouraged Coast Guard officials to send Stone and five other officers to Naval aviation training. That same year, Congress authorized construction of 10 Coast Guard air stations along U.S. shore lines.

On May 31, 1919, Stone and a four-man Navy crew successfully completed the first aircraft crossing of the Atlantic. On a flight from New York to England, the men made only brief refueling stops in Newfoundland and the Azores.

But Coast Guard contributions to aviation actually started with the Wright brothers. When the history of aviation began at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, three members of the nearby Kill Devil Life Boat Station were on hand to help and take the only photograph of the epochal event.

Coast Guard aircraft and cutters played a prominent role in enforcing the unpopular prohibition laws in the 1920's. During the colorful era of the "Rum Wars," cutters and planes patrolled the coast to stop the smuggling of liquor into the United States. Generous funding during



A Coast Guardsman stands watch by a Liberty ship loading during World War II.

these years allowed the service to grow three times its World War I size.

While tensions mounted prior to World War II the Coast Guard carried out extensive patrols to insure that merchant ships in U.S. waters did not violate the Neutrality Act. The service began port security operations in the summer of 1940 and Coast Guard cutters operated off Greenland, the Western Hemisphere defense zone.

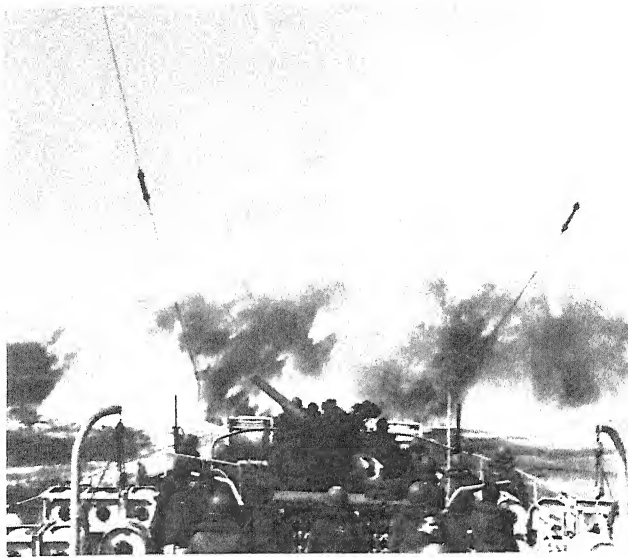
When the war broke out, antisubmarine warfare again became a major Coast Guard task. The cutters helped win the Battle of the Atlantic, sinking 11 U-boats. Coast Guard aircraft sank a 12th.

The cutter Campbell fought a night-long battle with a submarine wolf pack, rammed and sank one submarine, and probably crippled others with depth charges. The Spencer was credited with knocking out two subs and the 165-foot Icarus blasted a U-boat to the surface and captured its crew.

But the Coast Guard also continued its traditional search and rescue operations, pulling more than 4,000 survivors of enemy action from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

The Coast Guard hit its manpower peak during the war, operating 802 of its own craft and 381 Navy and 288 Army vessels. By June 1945 its personnel numbered more than 170,000, half of them serving aboard ships.

Many of the 504 Coast Guardsmen killed during the war were aboard eight cutters sunk by enemy fire. But Coast Guardsmen carried out other dangerous missions including the manning of landing craft that brought assault troops onto the beaches. Years of experience operating small boats through rough surf made the Coast Guard the logical choice to train and supply these crews for all invasions from Guadalcanal to Normandy.



A World War II cutter depth-charge crew hopes for signs of U-boat wreckage in the North Atlantic.

The service was also responsible for beach patrols of 40,000 miles of American shoreline. It paid off when Coast Guard "beach pounder" John Cullen spotted four Nazi saboteurs going ashore on Long Island. His alertness led to their capture and the arrest of four other enemy agents who landed in Florida.

1950-Present

After the war, Coast Guard strength was cut to a low of 18,687 men in 1947. The service did not become a part of the Navy during the Korean conflict, but the war had a heavy impact on Coast Guard peacetime missions. A program was begun to safeguard U.S. ports, harbors, and waterways and Coast Guard captain-of-the-port offices sprang up in most major cities. Merchant seamen and waterfront workers were checked to determine whether they were security risks.

The Coast Guard also added three weather stations in the Pacific to provide more accurate weather information for that area. It also constructed more Loran transmitting stations to aid ship and plane navigation.

One of the most dramatic rescues by the Coast Guard in the years immediately following the war occurred in 1947. The cutter Bibb was on ocean station between Ireland and Newfoundland. Ocean stations were Coast Guard weather patrols begun in 1940 to relay on-scene weather data to merchant ships and aircraft crossing the oceans.

On October 14 the Bibb intercepted a desperate radio message from a commercial airliner with 69 persons



The cutter Mellon, one of the Coast Guard's newer 378-foot high endurance cutters.

aboard. The Bermuda Sky Queen was almost out of fuel while still over mid-ocean.

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard cutter was fighting a violent storm that sent waves over her bow. Using radio beacons, the Sky Queen was directed over the cutter and discussed preparations for a dangerous ditching at sea. Crewmen on the Bibb readied lifeboats and spread oil on the water to calm the surface.

Although the plane hit a 20-foot wave head-on while landing, the aircraft hull remained intact long enough for the Coast Guard to rescue all on board. Weather satellites and automated data buoys later made Coast Guard ocean stations obsolete.

From 1947 to 1952 the size of the service doubled to 35,082, including 1,600 reservists. The SPAR, or women's reserve program, which stopped after World War II, was reinstated during the Korean conflict.

In 1965 the Navy asked for Coast Guard assistance in Vietnam to stop the infiltration of enemy junks, which were capable of moving through narrow waterways and heavy marine traffic to resupply Viet Cong forces.

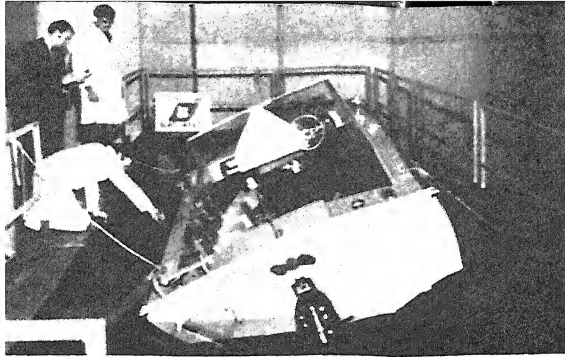
The Coast Guard responded and sent seventeen 82-foot cutters to Vietnam that spring. Also at the Navy's request, the Coast Guard provided five large cutters to the region to strengthen coastal defenses. The Coast Guard built several Loran stations in South Vietnam and Thailand, operated an extensive aid-to-navigation system and supervised the unloading of ammunition from ships.

On April 1, 1967, after nearly 177 years in the Treasury Department, the Coast Guard was transferred to the new U.S. Department of Transportation.

The move boosted the already expanding Coast Guard missions with added responsibilities for marine environmental protection, bridge inspection and marine law enforcement.

In the early 1970's, the Coast Guard Reserve underwent a significant overhaul in adopting the program of "augmentation." Now reservists perform on weekends and during annual two-week training the same missions as regulars in the service.

In March, 1977, the Coast Guard began enforcement of the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act which extended the fishery patrol area to 200 miles from U.S. shores, bringing to about two million square miles the Coast Guard's offshore patrol responsibilities.



uard compliance testers perform a flotation test.

ating Safety

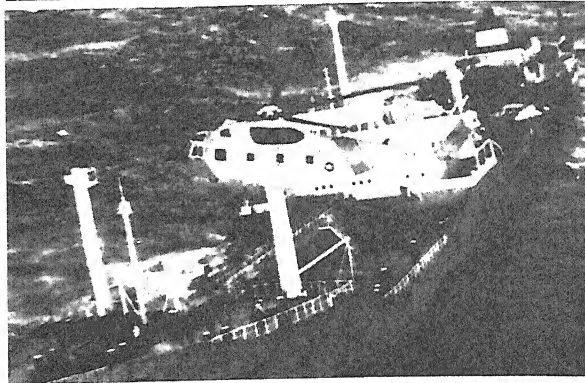
At the turn of the century, recreational boating has rapidly grown to become one of the nation's most popular pastimes. The boating accident and fatality statistics have grown accordingly. In 1971, the Coast Guard was given the task of creating a national boating safety program. Since that time, the boating fatality rate, measured in deaths per 100,000 recreational boats, has halved. Coast Guard efforts to make safer boats available to boaters include developing minimum boat standards, monitoring compliance and administering a safety recall or defect notification program under which boat manufacturers could be required to notify owners and correct the defect.

Efforts to improve the boater's safety awareness include developing safety information and coordinating education and other safety activities with the States and other safety organizations. The Coast Guard also supports the volunteer Coast Guard Auxiliary with a membership of over 40,000. The Auxiliary provides public education, courtesy vessel examinations, regatta patrols and on-water assistance. Coast Guard liaison with the States and other safety organizations helps to assure maximum effectiveness of all available resources.

uard Auxiliary on patrol duty.



Search and Rescue



A large Coast Guard helicopter evacuates personnel from the ill-fated Argo Merchant.

In just one year, the Coast Guard receives 71,000 calls for assistance on the water—7,000 persons are saved from death, 200,000 other persons are aided, and \$1 billion dollars worth of property is saved.

These impressive figures are due to the Coast Guard's Search and Rescue operations, perhaps the best known and most traditional of all the Coast Guard's missions.

Throughout America's inland waters and along her coastal borders, the Coast Guard maintains rescue stations manned round the clock, ready to launch small boats within minutes of a distress call. The Coast Guard's 26 air stations are also on 24-hour call, ready to lend search assistance. Vital communications necessary to coordinate the work of these units is handled through the Coast Guard's net of district Rescue Coordination Centers (RCC), which are backed up by Pacific and Atlantic commands and, ultimately, by a national communications nerve center located at Coast Guard Headquarters.

The result is a national search and rescue effort, ready to respond to any threat to life and property on the water, from an overturned rowboat to a major maritime disaster.

Related to the Coast Guard's SAR activities is the coordination of the Automated Mutual-assistance Vessel Rescue (AMVER) program, an international organization of volunteer merchant vessels, designed to give, at a moment's notice, the exact location and medical aid status of participating vessels to any vessel reporting distresses at sea.

The Coast Guard also participates in the International Ice Patrol, begun in 1913 as a result of the Titanic disaster. Each year, the Coast Guard, assisted by other member nations that use these sea lanes, patrols a 45,000 square mile area, including the North Atlantic sea lanes and the Grand Banks fishing grounds. In an average year, 200 to 400 icebergs are tracked. Occasionally, the figure jumps to as many as 1,000.

Aids to Navigation

One of the oldest missions of the Coast Guard—almost as old as the United States itself—is aids to navigation.

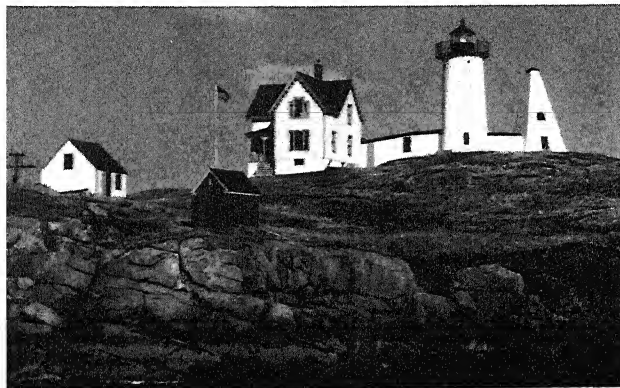
Oldest of the nation's aids to navigation are the light-houses. Some of the existing structures date back to the '00's. A few are still Coast Guard manned but many have been converted to automatic operation.

Today's Coast Guard maintains nearly 400 light-houses and more than 12,000 minor lights. They are located in, on or near prominent coastal points, channels and their entrances, lakes, rivers, inland waterways and dangerous areas. Collectively they mark 40,000 miles of navigable waters.

Altogether, the Coast Guard maintains more than 48,000 aids to navigation, more than half being buoys. To keep these aids in proper condition, the Coast Guard has a fleet of buoy tending ships and boats ranging in size from the 180-foot ocean-going tenders to 21-foot patrol craft.

Aids to navigation, however, are far more than just lighthouses and buoys. There are also sophisticated large navigational buoys and off-shore towers that have replaced venerable light ships and Long Range Aids to Navigation (LORAN) stations that emit radio signals capable of helping a ship's master know his position within a few yards.

ape Neddick Lighthouse, York Beach, Maine.



buoy tender crew hoists a buoy aboard for repairs.



Merchant Marine Safety

The Coast Guard's regulation over the safety of the United States merchant vessel fleet is one of the service's most technically complex duties.

Virtually from design to construction, the nation's merchant vessels themselves are under Coast Guard regulation.

The Coast Guard approves the design of new vessels and many of those involved in building them must pass Coast Guard examinations. The Coast Guard also prescribes a wide variety of safety equipment for merchant ships—lifeboats, first aid kits, fire-fighting systems and lifesaving equipment.

Once the new ships are launched, those who sail them are licensed by the Coast Guard. For certain serious violations, the Coast Guard may also revoke their licenses. The loading of certain types of dangerous cargo is regulated and the vessels are continually inspected. If the ship is involved in a serious accident, it will be the Coast Guard that investigates to find out what happened and why.

Coast Guardsmen check fittings aboard tanker.



Marine safety inspector checks fire-fighting equipment.



Environmental Protection

Since the first pollution laws were passed in 1899, the Coast Guard has been charged with the responsibility of establishing and enforcing regulations dealing with marine environmental protection.

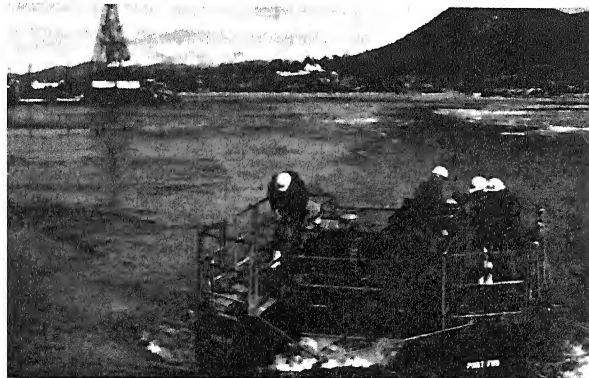
Sophisticated techniques have been developed to prevent oil spills from grounded vessels. And, if prevention efforts are too late, new Coast Guard systems can be used to minimize environmental damage and clean up spills.

To enforce the regulations governing intentional oil discharge, for example, a method has been developed to "fingerprint" oil spills—analyze the oil and compare it with samples from all vessels known to have traversed the area during the days preceding the spill.

Other environmental protection efforts conducted by the Coast Guard include regulating transportation of hazardous cargoes such as LNG (liquefied natural gas), and potentially hazardous chemicals such as insecticides and herbicides.

Coast Guard units assigned to carry out these environmental protection duties include three exclusive "strike teams"—elite groups of experts in oil pollution control, marine salvage, diving and other fields. These highly mobile units can deploy within hours to sites of maritime disasters involving spills. The teams, with their special equipment, are airlifted aboard giant Coast Guard HC-130H transport planes.

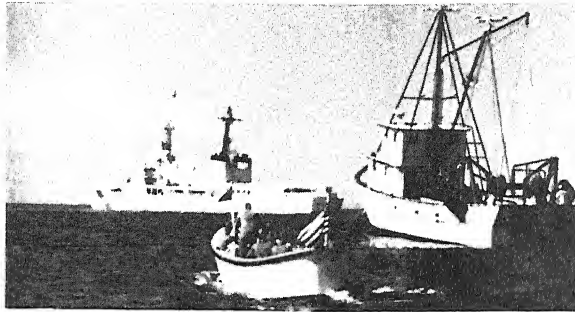
Oil skimmer at work on river.



Containment boom deployed on beach.



Maritime Law Enforcement



Boarding party approaches foreign fishing vessel.

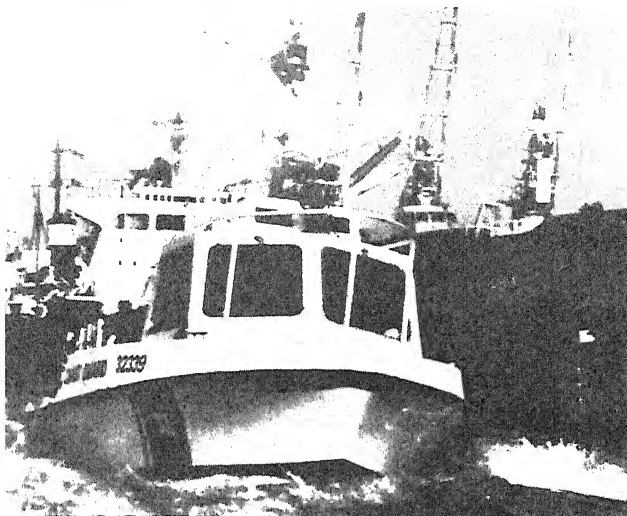


Guarding suspects during illegal drug seizure.

In 1790, the Coast Guard was formed under the name of Revenue Marine specifically to protect federal revenue on foreign imports. Since that time the Coast Guard has been the primary federal agency for all maritime law enforcement. The Coast Guard annually expends thousands of cutter days and flight hours in support of the law enforcement mission. Coast Guard cutters and aircraft enforce customs and immigration statutes; the suppression of narcotics smuggling and illegal aliens; fisheries laws and international agreements including the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (200 mile limit); the international prohibition of piracy and domestic maritime theft; environmental laws protecting endangered species, marine mammals (whales and seals), and marine sanctuaries; and other U.S. laws and treaties which apply to the maritime region.

To handle this vast area of responsibility, the Coast Guard maintains a fleet of vessels ranging from 30-foot patrol boats to sophisticated 378-foot cutters equipped with flight decks to accommodate helicopters. Assisting these vessels are the Coast Guard's jet helicopters and fixed wing patrol aircraft.

Port Safety



A 32-foot utility boat patrols a busy harbor.

The Coast Guard's port safety mission is to protect vessels and waterfront facilities from damage through sabotage, subversive acts, accidents or other causes.

Port safety is handled through the Coast Guard's 54 captain-of-the-port offices, and usually in conjunction with area marine environmental safety and marine safety offices. Its responsibilities include inspecting commercial vessels for safety of their equipment and cargo stowage, especially when dangerous cargo is listed on the manifest.

Port safety inspectors also routinely check cargo facilities to ensure that safety regulations are met, both for the facility and the handling of wharf cargo.

Daily checks are made on vessel traffic in the harbor. and special transport arrangements, security zone classifications and other special authorizations for port movement are set by port safety.

The wide-reaching efforts of port safety personnel produce impressive statistics: annually, 85,000 shore-side facilities are inspected, 54,000 vessel boardings are performed, over 2,000 dangerous cargo loadings are supervised. These require 8,300 cutter hours, 21,000 boat hours and over 600 aircraft hours each year.